

800-346-9140

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***Funded by USDA  
Rural Business-Cooperatives***



***Sustainable Agriculture and  
Rural Development Program***



***mechanism for disseminating information***

***tremendous information resource base***

***national programming interest***

***complements all educational programs***

# ***SUSTAINABILITY***

***common sense management that ensures a profit,***

***maintains environmental integrity,***

***emphasizes quality of life for farm families***

## **ATTRA's base is written materials**

- individualized responses to specific questions
- over 150 publications available

**Sustainable pasture management**

**Rotational grazing**

**Sustainable beef management**

**Introduction to paddock design and fencing-water systems**

**Matching livestock and forage resources**

**Meeting nutritional needs of ruminants on pasture**

**Assessing the pasture resource**

**Nutrient cycling in pastures**

**Beef farm sustainability check sheet**

**Integrated parasite management for livestock**

**Dairy farm sustainability check sheet**

Controlled grazing illustrated









# **We wanted to:**

expand the concept of grazing workshops

establish a systems approach to  
beef farm planning

present the dynamic complexity of decisions



# Beef Farm Sustainability Checksheets and Workshops



*whole farm planning*

*with*

*beef-forage systems*

*University of  
Tennessee*



**NRCS**

*University of  
Arkansas*

***We are working together to:***

***do more collaboration--less turf protection***

***be more effective in educating producers***

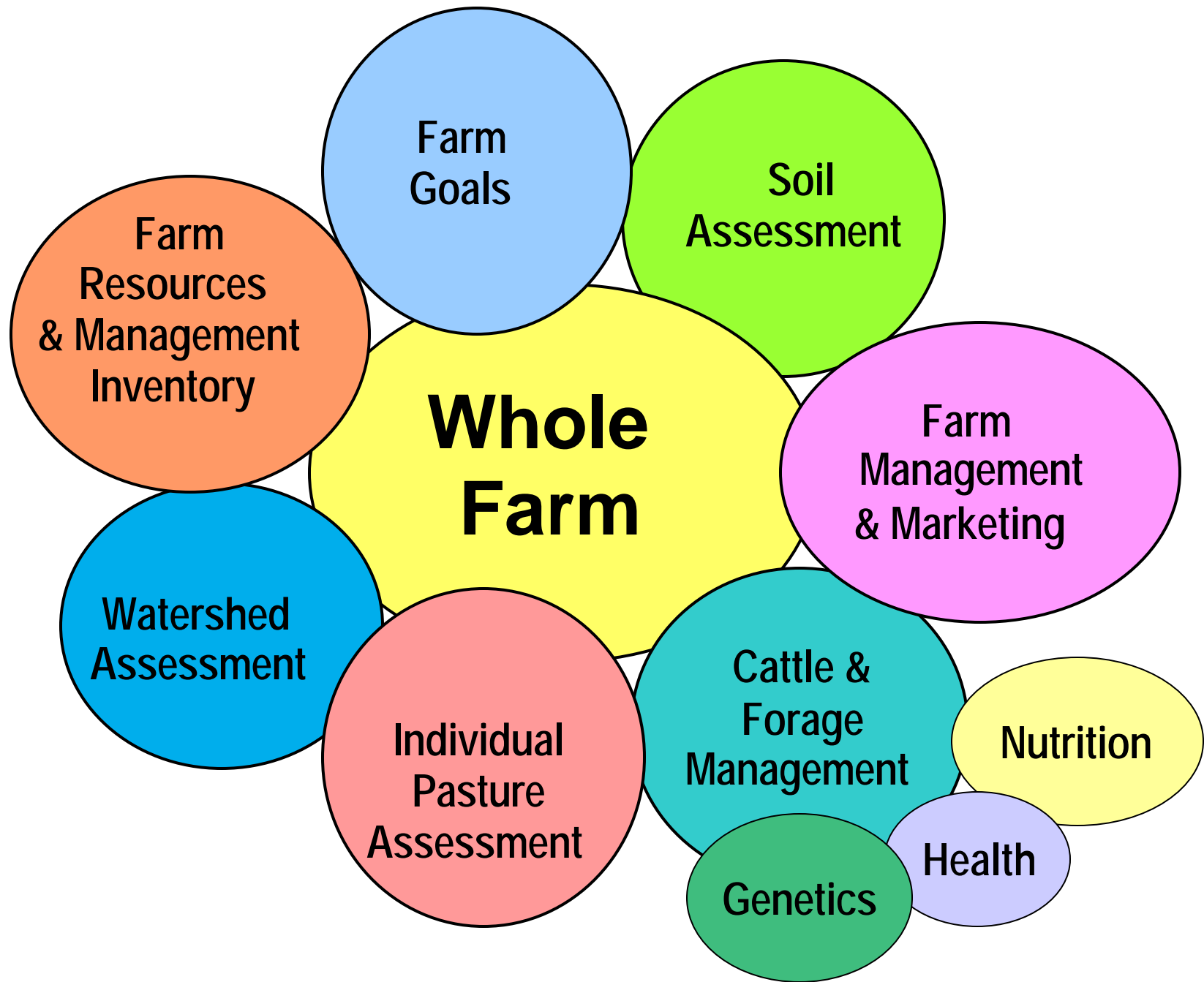
***do more in-depth training of educators***



**a systems approach**



**to beef production**





**Indicator of herd productivity:  
production per cow**



**Indicator of farm productivity:  
production per acre**

# I. CATTLE AND FORAGE PROGRAM

## A. Herd health and reproductive management

*Well-nourished , stress-free animals are the foundation of a sustainable beef cattle program. This means animals are healthy and perform better, are easier to manage and care for, and can more easily handle adverse conditions. While seemingly a simple question, this is intended to stimulate quick evaluation of any stress the animals may have. Simply walk into your herd and take a look at your animals.*

\_\_\_What is the overall appearance of your whole cattle herd?\_

\_\_\_Do your cattle appear to be thrifty, contented, and performing to your satisfaction?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_What vaccinations do you give?\_\_\_\_\_



**What are your herd health goals?\_\_\_\_\_**

**Do you**

**\_\_\_\_\_ pregnancy-check cows?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ fertility-test bulls?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ have a defined breeding/calving season?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ calve the majority of your cows the first 21  
days of calving season?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ routinely condition score cows?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ have a clean area for calving?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ feed and water in clean areas?\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_ have handling facilities which minimize  
stress to livestock and handler?\_\_\_\_\_**

# *Beef cattle nutrition*

## *...as related to grazing*



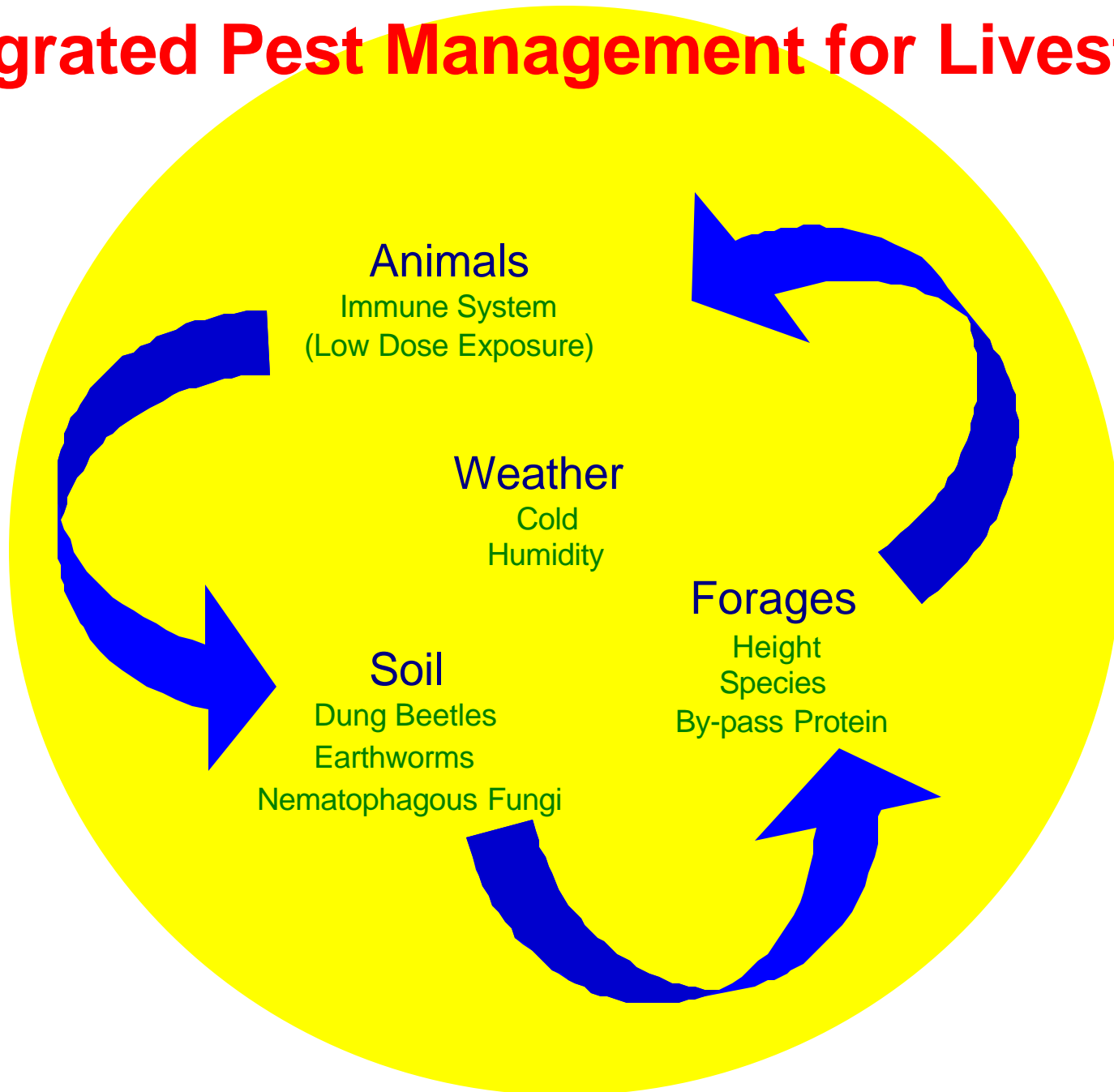
***ruminant nutrition***

***feed budgeting***

***forage species/variety selection***

***grazing mechanics***

# Integrated Pest Management for Livestock



# The checklist as a *tool* for educators

- A whole-farm approach to beef operations
- In-depth -- to identify "problem areas"
- Information geared toward producer's goals
- Better understanding of educational needs

*The workshops are planned for*

Extension agents  
NRCS personnel  
Producers



*Having all represented is best*



# Grassroots Grazing Group (GGG)

workshops, listserv, pasture walks



funded through an  
EPA Sustainable Development Challenge Grant



# Grassroots Grazing Group

“pasture walk”





## **Grassroots Grazier's Training**

**Advanced grazing management**

**Participants volunteer hours to  
their community**

**Ten 2-hr classroom sessions**

**Two half-day field sessions**

**Taught in two locations**

The Grassroots Graziers Training program provided us with the skills, knowledge and tools to more efficiently finish market lambs using a low-input forage based system. Using intensive controlled grazing of land with average fertility in the Southern Ozarks, we decreased the average market age of our meat lambs from 10 months to 6 months with minimal grain input.” Jim Morgan, sheep producer.





## Points to consider:

- “learns to know” client
- client needs to do self-assessment
- fewer extension agents know “dairying”



**Dairy Farm Sustainability Checksheet**



County  
extension

ATTRA

NRCS

Farmer

State dairy  
extension

Dairy check sheet farm visit



## Present projects:

**Whole farm planning for production of grass-fed beef**

**SARE funding**

**farm case studies**

**conferences**

**subcontracted research**

**Sustainable livestock production workshops**

**NRCS funding**

**advanced grazing management training**

**multiple locations**

**customized to “local” need**



## Into the Future? :

- Adding livestock to small farms
- More training for educators
- Introductory AND advanced information
- More emphasis on economics of family farms
- Better understanding of  
    “best management practices”
- Application of international information

## We have learned:

- a common goal allows people with different backgrounds to contribute and feel part of process
- farmers and educators want better information
- producers need to see practices being applied
- producers and educators together in same setting allows for more complete learning by both

- **ATTRA can and should do more than written materials**
- **the checksheet can be adopted to other areas**
- **county level personnel want to be more effective**
- **county level personnel are usually inexperienced and do not necessarily have ag background**

## Key ingredients

- building peer relationships  
between farmers and educators
- establishing support for people who take risks
- illustrating the value of group approach  
in multiplying learning
- forming a renewed sense of community

## Results are

- community building
- real changes in how people farm
- leadership development
- shared learning
- renewed sense of excitement
- enjoyment in farming

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